

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

Please **WITHDRAW** claims 7-35, without prejudice or disclaimer.

A copy of all pending claims and a status of the claims is provided below.

1. (original) A method of manufacturing a structure, comprising the steps of:

 providing a structure having an insulator layer with at least one interconnect;

 forming a sub lithographic template mask over the insulator layer; and

 selectively etching the insulator layer through the sub lithographic template mask

to form sub lithographic features spanning to a sidewall of the at least one interconnect.
2. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the sub lithographic features are substantially vertical columns in the insulator layer.
3. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein the sub lithographic features further include a plurality of holes formed in a capping layer beneath the sub lithographic template mask and having a diameter or cross section less than a diameter or cross section of the at least one interconnect and also substantially equal to the substantially vertical columns in the insulator layer.
4. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the etching step is an anisotropic etching forming a plurality of the sub lithographic features defined as nano columns.

5. (original) The method of claim 4, wherein the etching step includes an isotropic etching to meld at least adjacent nano columns together and provide an undercut below the at least one interconnect.

6. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein:

the sub lithographic features are substantially vertical columns in the insulator layer;

the sub lithographic features further include a plurality of holes having a diameter less than a diameter of the at least one interconnect and substantially equal to the substantially vertical columns in the insulator layer and a top portion of the holes are tapered.

7. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of depositing a capping layer prior to the forming step and pinching off a top portion of the capping layer to form pinched off structures having a sub lithographic diameter.

8. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of depositing an insulating layer on the portion to form the pinched off structures.

9. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 8, wherein the depositing step forms insulator material on the sidewalls of the at least one interconnect, which was etched away during the etching step.

10. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the sub lithographic template mask is a diblock copolymer nanotemplate formed on a diffusion layer, the diffusion layer acting as a mask having features transferred from the diblock copolymer nanotemplate.

11. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein the diblock copolymer nanotemplate has features smaller than spacings between adjacent interconnects.

12. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein the diblock copolymer nanotemplate is a material which self assembles itself into substantially uniformly shaped and spaced holes or features.

13. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein the features of the diblock copolymer nanotemplate 150 are in a range from below 10 nm to 100 nm.

14. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the diblock copolymer nanotemplate is formed one of (i) partially over a blockout resist over the insulation layer and (ii) below the blockout resist, the blockout resist includes features that are larger than a spacing between adjacent interconnects.

15. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of removing the block copolymer nanotemplate and blockout resist after the formation of the sub lithographic features in the insulation layer.

16. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of providing a capping layer over the insulation layer.

17. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the sub lithographic template mask is a metal deposition layer which is treated to cause agglomeration.

18. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein the metal deposition layer includes a material of one of Au, Ag, In, Sn and Ga.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein the agglomeration is formed by annealing and the agglomeration creates sub lithographic features in the range of 1 nm to 50 nm.

20. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 19, wherein the annealing causes nano islands which are used as a mask in an etching step.

21. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein the metal deposition layer is deposited over a capping layer.

22. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 21, wherein the capping layer is formed from material from one of SiN, SiC and SiCOH

23. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 21, further comprising the steps of :

etching the capping layer through the sub lithographic features formed in the metal deposition layer to form pores corresponding to the features in the metal deposition layer;

removing the metal deposition layer; and

etching the insulation layer using the capping layer as a mask to form the sub lithographic features.

24. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 23, wherein the sub lithographic features are substantially vertical pores.

25. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 24, further comprising melding together adjacent vertical pores between the at least one interconnect.

26. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 23, wherein the sub lithographic features are backfilled with a second material than that of the insulation layer.

27. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 23, further comprising the step of providing a sealing cap over the sub lithographic features.

28. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the sub lithographic features are backfilled with a second material than that of the insulation layer.

29. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 27, wherein the sealing cap is selected from a material of SiN or SiC having a thickness in the range from 5 nm to 50 nm.
30. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of depositing an insulator material on the sealing cap layer with a different characteristic.
31. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the sub lithographic template mask is formed from a random hole pattern in resist using e-beam, x-ray or EUV lithography.
32. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the sub lithographic template mask is a random hole pattern in a 2-phase polymer mask using a porogen
33. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of forming a diblock patterning mask beneath the sub lithographic template mask.
34. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing a supra lithographic mask either over or underneath the sub lithographic template mask.
35. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 34, wherein the supra lithographic mask prevents formation of gaps over at least one area whose dimensions are larger than a minimum interconnect spacing.

36. (Previously withdrawn) A method of manufacturing a structure, comprising the steps of:

providing a structure having an insulator layer with a plurality of interconnects;

forming an insulating diffusion barrier layer on the insulator layer;

forming a blocking structure on the insulating diffusion barrier layer;

forming a sub lithographic template mask on the insulating diffusion barrier layer having sub lithographic features;

selectively etching the insulating diffusion barrier layer and the insulator layer through the sub lithographic template mask to form sub lithographic features in the insulator layer.

37. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein the blocking structure is formed one of under and over the sub lithographic template mask.

38. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein the sub lithographic features include a plurality of holes having a diameter less than a diameter of each of the plurality of interconnects and smaller than vertical columns formed in the insulator layer.

39. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein the etching step includes an anisotropic etching and an isotropic etching to dissolve partitions between the sub lithographic features and provide an undercut below at least one of the plurality of interconnects.

40. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein:

the sub lithographic features are substantially vertical columns in the insulator layer;

the sub lithographic features further include a plurality of holes in the insulating diffusion barrier layer having a diameter or cross section is approximately equal to a diameter or cross section of the substantially vertical columns in the insulator layer.

41. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 40, further comprising the step of pinching off the top portion of the holes with a capping layer.

42. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein:

the sub lithographic template mask includes a diblock copolymer nanotemplate with features ranging from below 10 nm to 100 nm; and

the blocking structure is a diblock mask.

43. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein the sub lithographic template mask is a metal deposition layer which is treated to cause agglomeration, the agglomeration creating nano meter scale islands which are used as a mask in the etching step.

44. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein the sub lithographic features are backfilled with a second material than that of the insulation layer.

45. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, further comprising the steps of :
depositing a sealing cap over the sub lithographic features in the insulator layer to
form pinch offs; and
depositing an insulator material on the sealing cap layer.

46. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein the sub lithographic
template mask is formed from one of (i) a random hole pattern in resist using e-beam, x-
ray or EUV lithography and (ii) a random hole pattern in a 2-phase polymer mask using
porogen.

47. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, wherein the etching step removes
insulator material from sidewalls of the plurality of interconnects and the insulator
material is later redeposited thereon.

48. (Previously withdrawn) The method of claim 36, further comprising depositing
insulation material over the sub lithographic features to form pinched off sections and to
provide insulation material on the sidewalls of some of the plurality of interconnects.

Claims 49-57. (cancelled)